THE ISLAMIC CITY

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8 Social stratification in Arabia

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SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND THE CITY QUARTERS

It is with the Arabian element in Islamic polity that this article is concerned when describing social structure and, specifically, with that of the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula where the ancient stratification can be seen to have survived up to our own time. I mean the Arabian element in the culture of certain cities there, previous to the drastic changes arising from the exploitation of oil, the handing over of the former Aden Protectorates, and subsequent political changes in 1962. In other parts of the Peninsula the old order is adapting itself to new circumstances without violent dislocation.

The social order then, on the available evidence, namely that of the pre-Islamic inscriptions and Arabic texts, has altered little from that of the Jāhiliyyah, except that the Prophet's House, the Sayyids and Ashrāf, have become the supreme aristocracy of the Islamic age, displacing in primacy such as the Qāḍī and Mashāyikh classes that I consider represent an arbiter-cum-priestly aristocracy of antiquity. But, while respected, the Islamic aristocracy's authority has never gone unchallenged.

In the seventh century, the Arabian tribes extended their sway over the vast Islamic empire beyond the confines of their Peninsula, but when they gave ground to other races (and Islam developed along the lines there that we know) the population of Arabia continued largely as it was, even indeed to the extent that in this very century of ours there were Arabian tribes that Islam had hardly touched, ignorant even of how to perform the prayer. The arms-bearing tribes dominated and the artisans and non-tribal cultivators stayed inferior and subject to them.

The bulk of the Arab armies that issued forth from the Peninsula on their course of conquest may well have consisted of tribesmen from the southern part of the Peninsula since its population would

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be larger than that of all the rest of the vast tracts of Arabia together. In his 'The Muslim City and the Mamlūk Military Aristocracy'[1], David Ayalon has said: 'One basic trait of Muslim military aristocracy is that, throughout its history, from the beginning of the Arab conquests up to the present day, it is specifically of an urban character.' This verdict, true as it is in other respects, does not seem to me to apply to the early Islamic period in Arabia where it is the tribal chiefs who mainly form this aristocracy, able, like the chiefs of the Scottish Highlands, to call out their men to support or oppose a central government. If mercenary troops, Ghuzz, Mamelukes, Ottomans, black slaves, have, at various periods been employed to maintain regimes in south-western Arabia, these have eventually inevitably given way to tribal forces.

The tribes of the southern part of Arabia are rarely nomads—historic Yemen west of the eastern steppes, for instance, is virtually without migratory tribes, apart from small groups of itinerant harvesters of the Tihāmah and such as the Ma'n 'gypsies' of Dathīnah. The great warlike Yemeni tribes are settled cultivators living in villages. Settled tribesmen cultivators are also to be found in other parts of Arabia, including the area of Yathrib/Madīnah at the time of the Prophet.

To comprehend the role and actions of the Prophet himself one must realize that Islām is a religion of tribes of the Ḥadar settled areas, not of the Bādiyah, and the Qur'ān[2] itself stigmatises the desert Bedouin as the worst in disbelief/rejection (*Al-A'rāb ashaddu kufran*). In the expansion of the first decades of Islam, the Bedouin shared in the gains only after they had come in to put themselves under the protection of the settled centre (Ar. *hājarū*).[3] That is to say, also, that the Bedouin were outside the confederation (*ummah*) headed by the Prophet, unless and until they made the positive act of joining it. In the first days, the Jews were a part of the confederation and in a sense they have remained so ever since—under the protection guarantee (*dhimmah*) of the Islamic community. They and the Christian communities who came under the protection of Islam, even in the Prophet's life time, have often played a part essential to the economy of the Islamic city.

The little city states of Arabia are the natural outcome of the economic and political needs of the tribal peoples whose interest

1. Printed as one of a collection in *Princeton Near East Paper*, No. 20, but first delivered as a lecture in 1965.
2. Qur'ān, IX, 98.
3. cf. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāyah*, Cairo, 1311 H., IV, 239, *Wa-'l-hijrah al-thāniyah man hājara min al-A'rāb wa-ghazā ma'a 'l-Muslimīn.*

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it is to keep them protected from violence and robbery. Protection may be given with the added sanction of religion—by making a town or village a sacred enclave. Or it may be purely secular, as when a tribal lord guarantees the security of a market. Offenders against the customary law of the country are banned from these centres. City and countryside are interdependent—the tribes cannot long do without the city—the city cannot function without the goodwill of the tribes around it.

In a paper in the Ṭāhā Ḥusayn Anniversary volume[1] I have sketched, on the basis of a corpus of materials as yet unpublished, the nature of the sacred enclaves, *ḥaram* and *ḥawṭah* protected by more than mere human agency. To these two institutions must be added the *hijrah* of the Zaydī provinces of the Yemen, differing somewhat from them in certain points, yet similar in principle. In our forthcoming volume[2] on the city of Ṣan'ā' I have pointed to the evidence for the existence of the *hijrah* in the Yemen as a pre-Islamic institution. The Prophet's *hijrah* has been translated in Europe as 'flight' then as 'migration'. In my view it should be considered equivalent to the Yemeni *hijrah*—this means seeking refuge with a tribe which will protect the refugees, people of the *hijrah*, against any kind of molestation. Those in the Islamic era who seek *hijrah* in a place which is, or becomes, a *hijrah* are generally Sayyid ulema who act as teachers and arbiters; perhaps the Qāḍī class can also act in this fashion—a point on which I have, as yet, insufficient evidence. But Jews can, I am informed, also be *hijrah*, though their role would naturally be utterly different from that of the Sayyids.

A town or city may be a *ḥaram*, *ḥawṭah* or *hijrah*, it may grow up around an inviolate enclave of one of these categories just mentioned, or it may have been accorded inviolate status. Of the three towns I propose to discuss, two are in certain degree considered protected by divine as well as human agency, Tarīm and Ṣan'ā', but even al-Shiḥr has a Quarter called al-Ḥawṭah, though I do not think town and port as a whole are considered to have any special divine protection. Of course this does not mean that the security of such places has never been violated, any more than that of the two Holy Cities of Islam, al-Ḥaramayn, but these cities are

1. Mélanges Taha Husain (ed.), 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, Cairo, 1962, 'Ḥaram and Ḥawṭah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia', 41–58. In the same volume the late G. E. von Grünebaum has written on the sacred character of Islamic cities which though it contains a number of interesting points, does not seem to get to the core of the subject.
2. *Ṣan'ā'; an Arabian Islamic city*, to be published by the World of Islam Festival Trust.

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considered to be excluded from the normal cut and thrust of everyday life.

From this I must pass to the office wherein lies the basis of all Arabian political life—that of the arbiter. This is the chief and vital function of the village headman or tribal *shaykh* up to the ruler, be he secular or theocratic. There are whole families of arbiters in southern Arabia, called in Ḥaḍramawt and some parts of the Lower Yemen, Mashāyikh. The Qāḍīs of the Upper Yemen also seem to be an hereditary class of a rather similar sort, though I have recently learned that the name Qāḍī is not in itself more than a few centuries old, and such families used to be called *Faqīh* (plur., *Fuqahā'*). An indication that these families continued to function in Islam as they had in the Jāhiliyyah is reflected in the Tradition, *Al-nās maʿādin, khiyāruhum fi 'l-Jāhiliyyah khiyāruhum fi 'l-Islām in faqihū*—i.e. people are of (various) origins, the noblest of them in the Jāhiliyyah are the noblest of them in Islam if they be instructed[1]. The last phrase may also be interpreted as 'if they have a knowledge of the law'. The pronouncement is stated to have been made by the Prophet in praise of the *naqīb* (chief) and sayyid (lord) of the Khazraj, Saʿd b. ʿUbādah.

The Prophet himself belonged to a family of arbiters of the aristocratic tribe of Quraysh, certain families of which were custodians of the Mecca Temple. As has been remarked above, the Prophet's descendants, in spite of their superior claims as arbiters, have been opposed by native Yemenis like al-Ḥamdānī and Nashwān b. Saʿīd who extolled the Qaḥṭānīs of the south. It is not without significance that opposition to the northern ʿAdnānīs in the 1950s—in the context the Yemeni Sayyids—was revived by a scholar of the Qāḍī class—the noted poet al-Zubayrī.

While the noble classes—Sayyids or Sharīfs, Qāḍīs, Mashāyikh, the tribes—bear arms,[2] a large section of the Arabian people who do not do so are known as *ḍaʿīf*, literally 'weak' i.e. in the sense that they are not armed, fighting men. This term occurs abundantly in early literature but its full meaning has not been appreciated by Western writers. The *ḍaʿīf* comes under protection of the *sharīf* tribes and the aristocracy, be it religious or secular.

In Ḥaḍramawt, the social structure is beautifully crystallized (at least in theory) and it seems to me that this may well represent Arabian society in one of its earliest known forms. Here the

1. Discussed in my *The Sayyids of Ḥaḍramawt*, London, 1957, but it figures in a full context in al-Wāqidī, *K. al-Maghāzī*, ed. by Marsden Jones, London and Cairo, 1966, II, 547; al-Wāqidī adds to *faqihū, fi 'l-dīn* and has *khiyārukum* in the second person.
2. Most Ḥaḍramī Sayyids are stated to have given up the bearing of arms in the seventh century A.H. (thirteenth century A.D.), as stated in my *Sayyids*, 19.

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protected classes are the *masākīn*[1] *ḥaḍar*: merchants, craftsmen and petty traders. The *masākīn ḍu'afā'/ḍa'fā* are basically the 'workers in clay'.[2] They appear to correspond very approximately to the Bayāsirah and Bayādir[3] of Oman. One does not, however, hear of 'pariah' groups, as von Maltzan[4] has called them, that exist chiefly in the south Arabian Tihāmah. On the southern coasts, fishing was not regarded as an occupation for Arab tribesmen at one time, whereas in the Gulf it is not held to be demeaning. Slaves in Ḥaḍramawt are employed as field workers or soldiers.

A distinction must be drawn between craftsmen who are merely despised by the tribesmen, unless the latter follow certain crafts themselves—there is no hard and fast line of distinction applying to all south Arabia—and between the *métiers vils*[5] as Brunschvig calls them, which are demeaning or defiling. If occupations listed in one category or the other are not always consistent, at least two types of occupation that demean can be distinguished—body service of any sort and unclean work, particularly anything that involves handling human excrement or animal dung.

The earliest Islamic source that demonstrates the existence of such a social discrimination is, as might be expected, Tradition itself, as, for example, quoted by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,[6] '*Lā taj'alhu ḥajjāman aw qaṣṣāban aw ṣā'ighan*, Do not make him a cupper (of blood) or butcher or silversmith.' Some sources add *ṣāni'* probably in the sense of a weaver. The medieval Yemeni *Kitāb al-man'ah* which I have been so long editing, names these body employments (*ḥiraf badaniyyah*) as the *ḥajjām*, *dabbāgh*, *kannās*, cupper, tanner, sweeper, and refers to al-Rāfi'ī. Then, turning to tribal law, the author, a Tihāmah Shāfi'ī from the weaving town of Bayt al-Faqīh, poses the question as to whether weaving (*ḥiyākah*) is one of the demeaning professions (*al-mihar al-daniyyah*) but, naturally enough, he maintains that the better of the two opposed points of view is that it is not! The shoemaker (*ḥadhdhā'*) and *al-tājir al-qammāṭ*, apparently the cattle buyer, says this Yemeni writer, do not have

1. *Masākīn*, sing. *miskīn*, from *sakana*, almost certainly in the sense of 'to dwell'.
2. Professor W. Dostal in his section of the Ṣan'ā' volume adds one or two other occupations.
3. cf. J. C. Wilkinson, 'Bayāsirah and Bayādir', *Arabian Studies* I, 75 et seq., Cambridge and London, 1974. They are a client class.
4. A. von Maltzan, 'Paria-Kasten in Südarabien', *Ausland*, Münich, 1872, XLIV, 1024–8. cf. my 'South Arabian and Ethiopic-African Elements in the South Arabian Population', (*Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Haile Selassie I University*, 25, 34, Addis Ababa, 1966.
5. 'Métiers Vils en Islam', *Studia Islamica*, XVI, 41–60, Paris, 1962.
6. *Musnad*, I, 17, as cited in A. J. Wensinck *et al.*, in *Concordance . . . de la Tradition Musulmane*, VIII, 61 et seq., Leiden, 1909, and the information on *hajara* in general.

their testimony accepted in *man'ah*, i.e. customary law, and he adds that some people include silver-and-gold-smithery (*ṣiyāghah*) and dyeing (*ṣabgh*) in the low class.

The Bani 'l-Khums in Ṣan'ā' (in some other towns *'indīl*, plural: *'anādīl*[1] for the unclean or servile crafts and occupations, is a strange term. The origin of this mysterious phrase, the 'Sons of the Fifth' is as yet untraced. Rossi[2] has advanced the theory that they were originally made up of prisoners of war. Perhaps the name is connected with the 'fifth' part of the booty and the Bani 'l-Khums were captives sold into serfdom—if this is the case it could be an Islamic term. Some small support lends itself to this theory in that Islamic Tradition speaks of the *'abd ḥajjām*, the slave cupper, one of the demeaning occupations. Those in Ṣan'ā' who pursue unclean trades, especially where leather is involved, are belt-makers, saddlers, tanners (*dabbāgh*), cobblers (*munaqqil*), butchers (*jazzār*), charcoal sellers (*bāyi' al-sawd*), grooms (*sawwās*), and any person working at something involving human excrement or dung. The *qashshām* attached to the mosque gardens, looking after ablution water with which he irrigates his leeks, and handling ash from the human excrement burned in the bath houses is an interesting case. Other trades listed by Rossi are the *muzayyin* (barber, bathman), cupper (*ḥajjām*), coffee shop proprietor (*muqahwī*), *qāt*-seller (*muqawwit*), and *ṣāni'* workman—particularly in the sense of a weaver. Ṣan'ānīs have, however, disputed that the weaver falls into this last category. Most of these are servile occupations. Some trades such as those of the butcher and bath-keeper bring wealth, but no social advancement. In Imāmic times, should a man in a class other than the Bani 'l-Khums be slighted (*yinbuzuh* = *yuḥaqqiruh*) by being called a *muzayyin*, *qashshām* or *munaqqil* he would be enraged and affronted and take the man who had called him these names before the Imām. On the other hand, for a citizen in Ṣan'ā' to be called a blacksmith (*ḥaddād*) would not be an insult at all.

The tribal attitude towards the inhabitants of Ṣan'ā', seems well brought out in *Iklil X*.[3] Qays Abū Mu'īd, apparently the Lord of the great Hamdān tribe, said to the Zaydī Imām Aḥmad al-Nāṣir (first quarter of the fourth century A.H.) 'when he had been harsh in speech to him on account of a man slain in his territory (*ḥadd*), a Ṣan'ānī, "You seem to want to please these traders (*muttajirah*)

1. Ismā'īl al-Akwā', *Al-Amthāl al-Yamāniyah*, 264, No. 746, Cairo, 1968.
2. E. Rossi, *L'Arabo Parlato a Ṣan'ā'*, 142 et seq., Rome, 1939; Landberg, *Glossaire Datînois*, 2704, gives without close distinction, *najjār*, *ḥajjām*, *kharrāz*, *shāḥith*, *ḥā'ik*, *dallāl*, *jazzār*.
3. Al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl X*, 67, Cairo, 1949.

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and slave-like people (reading *al-zalmah*)[1] at my expense. I make an excellent friend when you are friendly, but a splendid foe if you are hostile." So al-Nāṣir repented and made his excuses to him'. For comparison, let it be said that some years ago the Wāḥidī tribespeople told me that tribesmen in the village of ʿAzzān had lost tribal status and become *nāqiṣ* because they had taken to petty trading, and this attitude is indeed general among tribes.

For centuries the citizens of Ṣanʿā' have been of varied social stratification and both the Sayyid and Qāḍī classes are well represented in the Ṣanʿā' *sūq*. There are also many families of tribal origin. Persons from all these classes are engaged in trading. It is quite honourable for Sayyids to work as blacksmiths and carpenters—not a demeaning profession (*ḥirfat naqṣ*)—and Sayyids would come from the mosque wearing their large turbans carrying their books and then turn to work at the anvil or with the plane. Many were to be found in the Sūq al-Fitlah and Sūq al-Kawāfī selling cloth or tailoring. The Imām al-Manṣūr Muḥammad, father of Imām Yaḥyā had a shop (*ḥānūt*) in the Sūq al-Kawāfī, yet he used to arbitrate (*yafṣil bayna 'l-nās*) in Ṣanʿā'. I have indeed also known of Sayyids in Saywūn of Ḥaḍramawt who worked at tailoring.

Contrary to Tarīm, makers of weapons, water-pipes, dyers, masons, brick layers, plasterers seem to be respected occupations. Such trades as those of the baker (*khabbāz*), oil and ghee vendor (*sammān*) and the *qashshār* selling coffee husk (*qishr*) are considered of lower standing than those aforementioned, but they are not despised and ordinary citizens engage in them, but Sayyid Aḥmad al-Shāmī told me that he did not remember at least that Sayyid houses entered into these types of business. The Sayyid would be a *tājir*, *bazzāz* or *ʿaṭṭār*, merchant, draper, seller of spicery, and working in Sūq al-Ḥalaqah. The ulema even have what he described as *al-shiʿr al-ḥirafī*,[2] poetry about the crafts, and indeed one comes across this occasionally in Yemeni literature.

In Ṣanʿā' each craft, trade or profession has its own headman

1. The text reads *dulmah*, blackness, but this is not altogether appropriate here. It is better to read *zulmah/zalmah* which, according to the *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, means *al-ʿabd zulmah, ay, qadduhu qadd al-ʿabd*, i.e. like a slave, exactly like a slave. *Qadd* means skin of a sheep, measure, etc.
2. cf. Muḥ. b. Muḥ. Zabārah, *Nashr al-ʿarf*, Cairo, 1359–76 H., I, 586, notes a *faqīh ālim, adīb, shāʿir* who used to work in *khazz*-silk and *ḥarīr*-silk, weaving, of these two kinds, flowers of a verdant garden. ibid., I, 789, refers to a Sayyid who used to work by hand on *qalānis*-caps. ibid., I, 176, refers to Aḥmad al-Ruqayḥī who was a dyer (*ṣabbāgh*) in indigo (*nīl*). ibid., I, 187, speaks of a *faqīh* skilled in silver-smithery (*ṣiyāghah*). Poetry of these persons is quoted, in al-Ruqayḥī's case about his craft of dyeing.

and laws, some of which figure in *Qānūn Ṣanʿā'*,[1] a fully annotated translation of which will appear in our book on the city.

The Yemeni tribes of the north do not consider building in stone or clay to be demeaning and I also found that as far away from Ṣanʿā' as in Wādī Jirdān of the Wāḥidī sultanate a person from any class might build without any detraction to his honour.[2] I have been surprised to find quite a number of other crafts which north Yemen tribesmen will follow today, though I am not as yet altogether certain whether they would have done so in the past, or if this is one of the social changes of our own time. Ṣanʿā' had quite a large Jewish population until about 1950, which had a near monopoly of certain crafts—in contradistinction to Tarīm and al-Shiḥr from which they long have disappeared. The Jewish community itself was stratified into three layers, the wealthy silversmiths, including those who managed the Ṣanʿā' Mint, the middling income group, and the lowest level which included the Jews who collected and sold human excrement from the privies to the bath keepers for fuel. There was evidently a Jewish artisan or trading community in Ṣanʿā' from the early Islamic period and most likely before that.

Until recently all the various social classes in the Yemen wore costume particular to their groups, as also in Ḥadramawt, in which latter indeed there were actually agreements on what might be described as sumptuary laws. The various classes still wear distinctive shapes of dagger. An astonishingly revealing evidence of the ancientness of this convention has just been brought to my notice by Professor Jacques Ryckmans, who has redrawn the hunting stele from al-Ḥazm in the Yemenite Jawf which depicts two figures side by side. One of the figures wears a dagger of the *tūzah* kind, which is the dress of Sayyids and Qāḍīs, the other the *ʿasīb* which is the dress of the Qabā'il, the Yemeni tribes—these were immediately recognized as such by Sayyid Aḥmad al-Shāmī.[3]

With regard to the social order, I am inclined to think that if the attitude of the Lord of Ḥamdān to the townsfolk of Ṣanʿā' in the fourth century A.H. is truly representative of that of this important tribe as a whole, then it has become much modified since that time, doubtless by the growth of Ṣanʿā' as a religious capital of Islam and a centre of economic activity, and other factors.

1. Al-Qāḍī Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Sayāghī, *Qānūn Ṣanʿā'*, *Majallat al-makhṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyyah*, Cairo, 1964, X, I, 273–307, translated also into English with full annotation in *Ṣanʿā': an Arabian Islamic city*.
2. Brian Doe and R. B. Serjeant, 'A fortified towerhouse in Wādī Jirdān (Wāḥidī sultanate)', II, *B.S.O.A.S.*, 1975, XXXVIII, II, 282.
3. See my *South Arabian Hunt*, London, 1976, 105 where both figures should be shown wearing daggers on their belts in front.

THE CITY OF ṢAN'Ā'

Ṣan'ā', capital of the northern Yemen, as contrasted with the town of Tarīm and port of al-Shihr, may properly be described as a city. While Tarīm for example is, in effect, a conglomeration of independent Quarters, Ṣan'ā' has, at some period in the past, been welded into an integrated whole. As its very name is held to imply, Ṣan'ā' has always been a fortified place, though, like other south Arabian cities it has not always been walled. On its eastern corner stand the Qaṣr and citadel, and near its western limit stood the pre-Islamic fort of Ghumdān, lying north of the Islamic Jāmi' Mosque—which of course at the present time has, through the westward growth of the city, become approximately central to it. There appears to have been a fort at Ghumdān in Islamic times and certainly the seat of government, Dār al-Imārah lay north of the Jāmi' in al-Hamdānī's day.

Ṣan'ā' is the *qaṣabah* of the north, i.e. its centre or capital. From Professor Beeston's examination of the sparse inscriptional references to pre-Islamic Ṣan'ā', it may be suggested that the city had something of the inviolate status associated with a *ḥaram*. There are also indications in al-Rāzī's *Tārīkh Ṣan'ā'*[1] (written before the mid-fifth century A.H.) that it was 'protected by God', though inimical traditions do assert the contrary. In the course of my own researches, several persons informed me that Ṣan'ā' was *muhajjarah*, maintained inviolate, by seven great tribal confederations. In some cases at least these tribes appear in the pre-Islamic inscriptions, as for instance, Hamdān and Khawlān. When the peace of Ṣan'ā' is in any way violated, *'aqīrahs*, sacrificial animals, have to be slaughtered there by the offender as a symbol of expiation and to renew the city's inviolability.

During its chequered history, Ṣan'ā' has endured all kinds of vicissitudes and seen much destruction but also there have been periods of great building. In the earlier centuries of Islam it was split into two parts, the Qaṭī' district under the Abnā', descendants of the Persian force that conquered it shortly before Islam and intermarried with the Yemenis, and the tribal native Banū Shihāb. The first Zaydī Imām held it for a few months and at times later Zaydī Imāms managed to maintain themselves there. The first Ottoman Occupation endowed it with some fine mosques which survive to this day and for three centuries until 1962, it was frequently the seat of the Zaydī Imāms who have left their strong impress on it. Its first direct contact with the modern world was

1. Ed. Ḥusayn al-'Amrī and Suhayl Zakkār, Damascus, 1975.

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through the second Ottoman Occupation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Old Ṣanʿā' is divided up into Quarters but, if it be accepted that the Ḥaḍramī towns of Tarīm and al-Shiḥr do still have the characteristics of the earlier stages of an Arabian town—a conglomeration of individual units, then Ṣanʿā' has broken down the separate entities of the Quarters. If the Ḥaḍramī organization is primitive, then that of Ṣanʿā' is medieval, and similar to, though much less developed than, the Persian city as described by Professor Lambton.[1] The influence of pressures from strong central governments on Ṣanʿā' city, may have been the most important factor in reducing individual Quarters into mere parts of one city. Such a process I now think, in retrospect, was taking place when I was in Tarīm, where the Sayyids were whittling away at the powers of the Quarters and centralizing the administration of the town. This was also happening in the other principal towns of Ḥaḍramawt under British protection, though it was educated Ḥaḍramīs who were the motivating force behind these changes. Yemeni historians—at least those I have read—have not recorded quarrels between the city Quarters—this is negative evidence of course—and any traces of the ancient quarrel between the Banū Shihāb of the Sirār Quarter and the Abnā' of al-Qaṭīʿ appear to have vanished centuries ago.

The striking difference between the Quarter organization of Ṣanʿā' and the Ḥaḍramī towns is that, in Ṣanʿā', the boundaries of each Quarter seem to have no special importance and their strict preservation from infringement is not an issue there. On the other hand the historians do record incidents where tribes of the Ṣanʿā' province have attempted, with arms and drums, to pass across one another's territory and have been fiercely resisted—this corresponds closely to what would happen in the Ḥaḍramī towns if one Quarter in ceremonial procession tried to cross the borders of another, but the Quarter folk in Ḥaḍramawt are not today of the tribal class and their weapon is the stick. Another dissimilarity is that, whereas in Ḥaḍramawt the Quarters are named after physical features of the sites they occupy, or sometimes after individuals, the Ṣanʿā' Quarters are nearly all named after the mosque of the locality.

Of course, the Quarter organization in Ṣanʿā' in many respects does resemble that of Ḥaḍramī towns. Each Quarter has its headman or *ʿāqil* who is responsible for dealing with petty disputes

1. A. K. S. Lambton, *Islamic Society in Persia*, London, 1954. See also, in general, W. M. Floor, 'The Guilds in Iran—an Overview from the Earliest Beginnings', *Z.D.M.G.*, CXXV, I, 99–116, Wiesbaden, 1975.

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in his area and for collecting money levies for local purposes on a per capita basis. He deals with emergencies, such as flooding, and looks after the streets of the Quarter. He acquaints himself with any strangers coming to it and keeps an eye open against robbery and thieving.

Unlike traditional Ḥaḍramī cities Ṣan'ā' has long had its own organization of night watchmen, the Ḥaras al-Layl, and the historians of the later centuries of Zaydī rule speak of the *shurṭah*, police, but I am not quite certain whether they are separate from the Ḥaras al-Layl. In the market these night-watchmen are maintained by contributions from the various crafts and trades.

The Ṣan'ā' Market is a highly developed and well-organized institution. It is a special entity on its own, each trade or craft electing a *shaykh*, and the *shaykhs* in turn appoint the Chief *Shaykh* who is responsible to the Governor ('Āmil) of the city. The *Qānūn Ṣan'ā'*, the statute embodying market regulations, which in its earlier recensions goes back at the very least three centuries, is in the main concerned with price fixing (*tas'īr*). It is to be remarked that the headmen of an individual trade or craft on at least some occasions meet in the mosque to discuss the affairs of the group. These groups are not, however, in my view, to be described as guilds. In Baṣrah of the age of Jāḥiẓ, the 'Aṣḥāb al-Iṣlāḥ' seem to have done the same. I am inclined to identify them with the *muṣliḥs* of the Ṣan'ā' with regard to their function, for the *muṣliḥ* is plainly a dealer who fixes a price between the wares the countryman brings to the market and the Ṣan'ānī buyer. Professor Ḍostal has remarked on their secret jargon or cant—and a secret dealer's lingo is also known to me from Aden and Shibām of Ḥaḍramawt.

Ṣan'ā' has, from early Islamic times at least, been a centre of commerce and used to be famous for its export of fine textiles,[1] including silks—some early Islamic examples have been discovered, and I was able to purchase for the Ṣan'ā' Exhibition[2] in London a fine woven silk *masnaf* in traditional style. Regrettably, fine weaving is no longer a Ṣan'ā' industry and even the polishing of gem stones is hardly to be found within its walls.

The Jewish community in Ṣan'ā' for centuries formed a sizeable proportion of the craftsmen of the city until about 1950. They lived in what is today called al-Jalā Quarter before their expulsion in 1680 and resettlement at Bīr al-'Azab to the west of old Ṣan'ā'. At one time they probably lived scattered among the Muslisms, as we know they did in other Yemeni towns. At one period they lived along the Barmakī *ghayl*—an underground water channel of the *qanāt-kariz*

1. cf. my *Islamic Textiles*, Beirut, 1972 (reprint from *Ars Islamica*), 124 passim.
2. cf. J. Kirkman (ed.), *The City of Ṣan'ā'*.

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type and probably also in Sūq ʿAqīl where they had many business establishments until 1950.

During the second Ottoman occupation, a Municipality (Baladiyyah) was established which made some alterations in the administration of the city and its organic structure. With the *samsarahs* or *khāns*, hostelries and warehouses, we deal at length in the Ṣanʿā' book as also with the Hot Baths (*ḥammām*) and the underground *ghayls* only recently disused, but to maintain which there would doubtless be well-defined administrative arrangements which as yet we have not studied. We also deal with the garden attached to each mosque, in some cases, originally hollows from which building clay has been extracted. There still remain many aspects of this well preserved medieval city to be examined.

TARĪM AND AL-SHIḤR

In 1947 and 1953, I was able to collect and copy a series of documents held by the Quarters or Wards of Tarīm city which I had explained and commented upon to me there and, on my last visit to Ḥaḍramawt in late 1964, I was further able to collect data on the coastal town and port al-Shiḥr and discover how the same type of Quarter organization applies to a maritime town engaged in fishing and trading. Both Tarīm and al-Shiḥr are walled towns but their dependence on agriculture and fishing respectively is reflected in the quite considerable areas of open land enclosed by their walls, for Tarīm has fields among its houses, whereas al-Shiḥr has spaces given over to the drying of fish and beaching of sambooks and canoes. The Quarter documents which I have are mainly concerned with disputes within or without the Quarter, the settlement of which they record, but the very nature of these disputes reveals much of the everyday life of these communities. Many years of reading in Arabic literature have produced for me evidence that inter-Quarter disputes[1] were common in the Islamic cities of the Middle East. There is not much information about the Quarters themselves but how they were organized and run, can, I think be reconstructed by inference from such documents.

The Quarters of Tarīm are inhabited by the two classes of small shopkeepers or artisans and workers in clay—builders, potters, cultivators, but the most important group perhaps is that of the

1. For example, al-Maqdisī, *Descriptio imperii Moslemici*, ed. by M. J. de Goeje, B.G.A., iii, Leiden, 1876 and 1906, 102, for disputes between artisan groups in Aden, Ibn al-Jawzī, *K. al-Muntaẓam*, Hyderabad, 1359 H., vii, 1494 passim. cf. A. K. S. Lambton, *Islamic Society in Persia*, op. cit., for rioting between different wards of a city, etc.

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dallāls or brokers working on a commission basis, who are the intermediaries with the tribesfolk coming from the country to buy and sell. Al-Shiḥr closely resembles Tarīm except that, instead of cultivators, it has a large class of fishermen or seamen and its *dallāls* are much concerned with fishing or port activities. All these classes are regarded by the arms-bearing tribesfolk as of inferior social standing to themselves. It is these lower orders exclusively who form the 'Children of the Quarter (*'Iyāl al-Ḥāfah*)'.

Tarīm is the capital of that celebrated religious aristocracy, the Sayyids of Ḥaḍramawt, scholars, but frequently also they are the capitalists who finance the share cropping agriculture of the country. An older religious aristocracy, the Mashāyikh, is also represented by certain families. The Ḥaḍramī Sayyids are mostly not armed and act as mediators in tribal disputes. Many Ḥaḍramī Sayyid families are also spiritual lords (*manṣabs*) of sacred enclaves in which tribal law does not run and war may not be waged. In Tarīm the Sayyids, like the lower orders, were groups protected by the tribes though they generally respected and sometimes feared them and the Mashāyikh. I must emphasize the fact that tribesmen living in towns can do so for generations without losing their tribal fighting qualities unless they abandon arms for the despised occupations, though of course the Quarters affected the daily lives of all the other groups. Society had a certain balance, with tribal rapacity to some extent limited by their fear of the Sayyids and their oppression of the lower orders by fear of killing the goose that laid the golden eggs. In Tarīm and other Ḥaḍramī cities, tribal factions headed by Sultans were in control and a love-hate relationship existed between them and the Sayyids, both classes being economically reliant on the lower orders.

In the histories we find reference in medieval times to the Ḥārat Āl Bā Sharīf, clearly a special Quarter of the Sayyids,[1] to the fort Ḥuṣn al-Ranād which occupies a pre-Islamic site, and to a Quarter of washermen, dobies, where, one supposes, there would also have been dyers and indigo-beaters. Today the largest Quarter is Ḥāfat al-Sūq, the Market Quarter, but there are Ḥāfat al-Khilayf, Ḥāfat al-Saḥil, the latter a strip of land under the mountain over-

1. Perhaps this is what is meant by Muḥ. al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-rawī*, Cairo, 1319 H., I, 140. 'What lies between these three mosques, I mean the Masjid Āl Bā ʿAlawī, the Masjid al-Saqqāf, and the Masjid al-ʿAydarūs, is called al-Ḥawṭah, and it has never ceased to be respected, the Sultan and those below him respecting it, so that the price of land in it has become much and its streets narrow'. The author also tells us that if anyone enters the ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār Mosque as a *mustajīr*, i.e. seeking protection, no one dares touch him, but they remain watching till he emerges.

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looking Tarīm, Ḥāfat al-Nuwaydarah[1] Ḥāfat al-Ḥāwī which is a sacred enclave or *ḥawṭah* of the Ḥaddād family of Sayyids, Ḥāfat al-Ruḍaymah, Ḥāfat ʿAydīd, a suburb outside the walls, Ḥāfat al-Mijaff, the old washermen's Quarter, and Ḥāfat al-Siddah, the Quarter of the Gate. Only five of these are important and some lesser Quarters 'follow', as they say, the bigger Quarters. There were several of these sacred enclaves within the city of Tarīm and the present day Ḥawṭat Bā ʿAlawī is probably the old Ḥārat Āl Bā Sharīf, but apart from Ḥāfat al-Ḥāwī these enclaves appear to have become absorbed into the ordinary Quarter structure.

The Sūq or Market Quarter seems to be mainly run by the brokers (*dallāl*) who, apart from their general functions, are the tribesman's agent. The tribesman stays in the broker's house when he comes to town to sell his animals and buy cloth, dates, etc.

The brokers used to treat their goodwill in the tribesmen as a commercial asset, buying and selling among themselves the right to act for certain tribes—I have a number of documents to this effect. In some of the other Quarters weavers used to predominate, but there were in Tarīm also carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, tinsmiths, masons and others. I propose to treat of these Quarters—in respect of their government, duties and offices held within them, their boundaries, religious ceremonial and hunting.

Each Quarter is run by its headmen or fathers—the *abwā-ubwā*, also called *muqaddams* or *ʿāqils*. They conduct the affairs of the Quarter and settle disputes between members of it. The weakness of the Quarters lies in the fact that they are perpetually quarrelling with each other and the Ḥaḍramī press of the 1950s and 1960s has many notices on their differences, during which persons were sometimes killed or maimed with sticks—the characteristic weapon in the Quarters. The main cause of these disputes lay in the occasions when one Quarter, in full ceremonial procession on some religious or secular ground, attempted to cross the boundaries of another Quarter—this also seems in the literature of Arabic to have been a common cause of trouble. Such occasions would be when the Quarter was going out to the Hunt—a very ancient ritual, as well as a sport, connected in ancient and present times with rainmaking—on the pilgrimage to the pre-Islamic prophet Hūd,[2] and even in several recorded instances at a funeral. The Quarters had then to take their quarrel for settlement to a third party, sometimes to the Sayyids, but sometimes, as in a case in 1911, to

1. *Khilayf*, *sahil*, *nuwaydarah*, all are topographical names applied to land, so that they figure in other cities also sometimes as names of Quarters.
2. cf. my 'Hūd and other south Arabian prophets', *Le Muséon*, LXVII, 121–79, Louvain, 1954.

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the Sultan of the day (Miḥsin b. Ghālib al-Kathīrī). The penalty for infringing the Quarter boundary was beating—the punishment executed by the *Abwā* or Fathers. One can of course come and go freely in the ordinary way between one Quarter and another as a private individual. Last century, the town of Tarīm was divided into three tribal fiefs under three Yāfi'ī Sultans and at that time the normal procedure in a judgement in a quarrel of the Quarters or other groups was that witnesses should take an oath on a saint's tomb—or recourse was had to the *bish'ah* (trial by ordeal), the tongue being lightly flicked with a red hot knife—and this in the highly orthodox city of Tarīm, though I must suppose that the actual performance of the ordeal did not take place there.

Each craft sought to retain its own particular trade in its own family or families and this is so engrained in the social structure that instead of asking for a mason in Tarīm to come and work for you, you could ask for Bā Sumbul—the family of masons in which the craft is hereditary, again, for the grave-diggers one would say Bā Huraysh,[1] since their name is synonymous with the profession. Such families allowed no other to practise their trade if they were in a position to prevent it, and a craft, for example, like the carpenter's, had the exclusive right to hang doors. In Tarīm you had to employ a carpenter from your own Quarter—nor could you dismiss him and take on another carpenter unless you could show that he had defaulted in his work in some way. I heard that in some cases a family with a particular monopoly in a craft could take legal action against persons attempting to infringe it, though this must, I think, have been in customary rather than *sharī'ah* law.

In the coastal town of al-Mukallā, some trades were even able to impose a fixed fee for certain services. On my first arrival there, I challenged the porterage bill as excessive (which it was) only to be visited by the headman of the porters who informed me that I had been charged at the rate standard for locals and foreigners alike—which it was in fact. In Tarīm, during the economic depression of the 1930s, the builders came out on strike when the Sayyids attempted to reduce their wage and succeeded not only in winning their point but, furthermore, managed to increase their rate of pay. Nevertheless, I hardly think these trades and crafts can properly be called either guilds or trade unions, though in the two coastal towns of al-Mukallā and al-Shihr they may be nearer

1. See my 'Cemeteries of Tarīm', *Le Muséon*, LXII, i-ii, 153–60, Louvain, 1949, and, in connection with this article, 'Building and Builders in Ḥaḍramawt', *Le Muséon*, LXII, iii-iv, 275–84, 1949; 'The Quarters of Tarīm and their *tanṣūrahs*,' *Le Muséon*, LXIII, iii-iv, 277–84, 1950. A poem by 'Askūl in my *Prose and Poetry from Ḥaḍramawt*, text 157 et seq., London, 1951, contains names of families or artisans.

to these types of organization than in Tarīm. It seems to me that they really represent a stage in the development of urban society anterior to a guild structure. The very paucity of references to any institution like a guild or trade union in ʿAbbāsid literature—at the moment I can only remember Jāḥiẓ's headman of the sweepers—may indicate that such organization of the trades as there was resembled what we have in Ḥaḍramawt today.

In Ḥaḍramawt, the artisan class in general is known as *ḥayk* or weaver, a class despised widely in the Arab countries at all periods to the extent that this is even embodied in Islamic *Ḥadīth* or Traditions.[1] Yet, from the Quarter documents I have, the headmen of the Quarters were drawn from various trades, it is clear that the workers in clay, i.e. field workers, builders, potters—the latter sometimes itinerant workers in Ḥaḍramawt—were inferior in status to the other artisans and 'followed' them.

The Quarters in Ḥaḍramawt in general organized quite extensive social services and they managed the principal festive and social occasions of the year. I draw mainly on my experience of Tarīm. There, at least one of the Quarters has a house at the Jāmiʿ mosque, a *waqf*, where the dead are washed, containing basins for this purpose. It is maintained by certain dues collected in the *sūq* by the headmen. The Quarter pays for the burial of paupers. In Ghayl Bā Wazīr some years ago, one Quarter bearing the bier of one of its deceased, attempting to pass through another Quarter, was stopped by it and the bier neglected while they set to fighting. In January 1962, the Kathīrī Sultan punished headmen of al-Ḥawṭah Quarter by beating for quarrelling over ceremonial at a funeral with another Quarter.

At weddings, however, the Quarter appears at its best—it provides the necessary gear for the entertainment, such as pots and pans. Men are detailed for the services of fetching firewood, drawing water, slaughtering sheep and serving the food. At Ghayl and doubtless most other places, the Shabwānī dance is

1. *K. al-Ḥayawān*, ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (ed.), Cairo, 1938–45, iii, 13. This theme is developed in the 10th century A.H. author Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Ḍaw' al-sirāj fī-mā qīla fi 'l-nassāj*, Chester-Beatty Ms. 3317, an edition of which I have commenced. Professor Beeston has drawn my attention to al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (ed.), Cairo, 1964, I, 52 (Manāqib al-Turk), 'As also sellers of old clothes, fish-mongers/fishermen, slave dealers, and weavers (*aṣḥāb al-khulqān wa-'l-sammākīn wa-'l-nakhkhāsīn wa-'l-ḥākah*) in every town (*balad*) of every sort are the evilest (*ashrār*) of God's people in selling and dealing'. For 'craftsmen and labourers of low status', see Muhammad Abdul Jabbar Begg, *The Social History of the Labouring Classes in ʿIraq under the ʿAbbāsids*, Cambridge, 1971 (Ph. D. thesis), which has assembled a considerable deal of information on these classes relevant to the study of the Islamic town, and R. Brunschvig, 'Métiers Vils en Islam', op. cit.

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organized by the headmen for the wedding days but disputes can arise even over the dance for in Tarīm in 1951, when two persons hailing from a different Quarter participated in the Shabwānī of al-Nuwaydarah Quarter, this gave rise to a fight in which no less than six persons were hurt.

There is a clear-cut division in the duties of the Masākīn—the petty shopmen and artisans—and the Ḍaʿfā/Duʿafā or workers in clay—mainly builders and cultivators. The Masākīn act at the 'mourning', taking turns at carrying the bier of the deceased, and in performing the services at weddings. It may be remarked that the person holding a wedding must invite some of the headmen as guests to ensure that the Quarter services are available. The Ḍaʿfā, on the other hand, have functions of their own special to them and are even distinguished by the dances they perform on ceremonial occasions—the *razīḥ* dance being peculiar to the Ḍaʿfā. To them exclusively belongs the function of dealing with the clearing out (*ghaṭīl*) of wells when this is necessary. To have your well dealt with, you approach the *Abū* or headman of the Quarter, who sends a man down the well to examine it and makes an estimate of what requires to be done. The *Abū* then summons the *ʿIyāl al-Ḥāfah* to do the work; and the well owner pays the *Abū*, who presumably divides the money out among the men. The Ḍaʿfā, immediately a call goes up of fire, flood or the collapse of a house wall, must turn out to deal with the situation and rescue any persons trapped and the nearest man must provide the tackle (buckets if it be a fire, mattocks and baskets for removing earth if a wall or bank has fallen). Again no person from another Quarter may intervene to help, even though he be closer at hand than the Men of the Quarter themselves. The technical term for this emergency in Ḥaḍramawt is *gharīq ḥarīq wa-bayt muhaddam*, i.e. drowning, burning, or house collapse, and the amazing thing is that this phrase is exactly parallel to that quoted by Jāḥiẓ[1] some 1,000 years ago for Iraq—*al-ḥarq wa-'l-gharq wa-mayl usṭuwān*, fire, drowning and falling of a pillar.

In Tarīm, Quarter dues are collected at 'The Scale'—*al-Quffān*, in the Sūq Quarter which is operated by the *dallāls* or brokers. If, for instance, a load of fish comes in from the Manāhīl tribe, the buyer and the Minhālī each pay a percentage to the *dallāl* who divides it out—part to the Dawlah, i.e. the Sultans, part to the *dallāl*, but there is a share also for the grave-digger, for the porter who carries the fish to the house or shop of the purchaser and a share is laid aside for the maintenance of bastards. This brings to light a very curious old custom—near al-Quffān is a little niche in

1. *K. al-Bukhalā'*, Ṭāhā al-Ḥājirī (ed.), Cairo, 1948, 77. cf. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, Schloessinger-Kister (ed.), IV, A, 180, 182.

the wall called *Ṭāqat al-Farkh*, the Bastard's Niche, to which a woman who has borne a child out of wedlock will secretly take her baby and lay it down there. When found, it is maintained by Quarter charity. Another source of revenue is that the skin of every animal slaughtered in the Sūq Quarter is paid to the Quarter. In 1954, when I collected the bulk of this information, it was remarked to me that there was no money in the Sūq Quarter now as the *muqaddams* or headmen had dishonestly 'eaten' it all, but the Quarters usually maintain a sort of reserve fund for emergencies.

Besides the dances arranged by the Quarter—of men only, of course, though the women dance in their houses—there are numerous other social occasions, in some parts of South Arabia there is a sort of All Fools' Day! There are also many religious festivals. Some of these latter are of an antiquity which goes far back into pre-Islamic paganism. There is, to cite a case in point, the Cattlemen's Picnic when the owners of the plough-oxen go out dancing and weaving their long loose hair; they think this picnic is connected with the well-being of their beasts. There is the Hunt of the Ibex; it is linked with rain-making and is characterized by a strict ritual of procedure. Ancient also is the pilgrimage to the pre-Islamic prophet Hūd who is mentioned in the Qur'ān—I have myself made the pilgrimage and later watched the Quarters turn out in force to welcome the returning pilgrims. Each Quarter has its own patron saint, that of the Sūq Quarter being ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār, and all the Quarters have their own special cries very often mentioning the name of the saint as, e.g. ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār:

> ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār, in every matter we shout for assistance to him.
> And the head of the foe whom we have made up our mind
> (to attack) we shall bring.

One of these saints, of a Mashāyikh family, is known as 'He of the Ibex' but though there are Mashāyikh saints in many places, most saints in Tarīm are Sayyids.

Tarīm city is felt to have a personality of its own—just as Mecca and its sacred enclave was in ancient days, perhaps up to this time of ours. For example, when there was an attempt to build an airstrip just outside it, some thirty years or so ago, the plan was abandoned after a plane crash, because as my old *shaykh* told me, the city or the pious ancestors, I cannot remember which, did not want an airfield. Tarīm is perhaps to be identified with the city of ʿAbdal (Servant of God) mentioned by the geographer Yāqūt.[1]

1. F. Wüstenfeld, *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*, III, 603, Leipzig, 1866–71, but one asks if this is perhaps 'Andal of Ibn Khurdādhbah, *al-Masālik wa-'l-mamālik*, M. J. de Goeje (ed.), B.G.A., VI, Leiden, 1889, 143.

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The Town is full of saints—the dead in their tombs and the living saints who inhabit Tarīm though they may not be known to be saints. Ḥaḍramīs returning from abroad follow the custom of first visiting the cemeteries and the pious ancestors interred there before even going to their families. There are three of these cemeteries within the walls, each for a different social class, the Sayyids, the Mashāyikh or non-Sayyid religious aristocracy, and the Masākīn. There is even the mosque of a pre-Islamic Christian saint, St Sergius.[1]

Al-Shiḥr is traditionally the port of Ḥaḍramawt and also a mooring place for the India trade fleets of earlier times, with a long history before Islam, a centre of the fishing industry. It is also the port through which pilgrims passed to perform the pilgrimage to the pre-Islamic prophet Hūd of Ḥaḍramawt. Nevertheless, it is astonishingly little known. Al-Shiḥr lies along a sandy beach and shipping simply anchors in the open roads before it.

Al-Shiḥr is divided into two parts by a flood course normally dry, and at one time a large rock stood there and was the focus of local ceremonies, on which I am unfortunately not informed, since the Quʿayṭī Government, considering these superstitious, blew it up.

The entire coast, including al-Shiḥr port itself, is called al-Maḥjab—meaning 'The Mooring Place'. The town seems to consist of ten Quarters; one of these called al-Qaryah, i.e. the village, seems to have been the original nucleus of the town and is to be accounted the oldest part. At one time it contained Sūq al-Khān, according to the historians, perhaps a hostelry like the Ṣanʿā' *samsarahs*, but this name now seems unknown. The Majraf Quarter can only be so named from the *jarīf*-net—basically a large cylindrical bag with a rope attached to each side; this net is drawn into the shore at the season when the sardine shoal, by two teams of men sometimes with animals, and the bag emptied on the beach—so this name means something like 'The Place of the *Jarīf*-Net Landing'. This net is commonly used on the Ḥaḍramī coast and on the Bāṭinah coast of Oman. East of this lies al-Ramlah, The Sand, which can be used for drying nets or fish. These two Quarters are wide open spaces with some houses and numbers of what is called a *ḥawsh*, fish-curing premises with yards for drying and curing fish and tanks for storing fish oils. Let me add that the whole coast is divided into separate stretches in each of which local customary maritime law is administered by fisher headmen who may have nothing to do with the town headmen, though they may become headmen in the town also—so a Shiḥrī fisherman knows that the

1. cf. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXII, iii, 574–5, London, 1959.

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jurisdiction of his headmen runs between fixed eastern and western points on the coast.

Some of the Quarters have the title *ʿAql* as in ʿAql Bā ʿUwayn, and I am informed that this means a place where Bedouins coming to the town hobbled their beasts—perhaps these Quarters originally lay beyond the town and today there is still al-Maḥatt, outside the town to the north-east where there is a camel park. The larger Quarters are divided into what is termed a *rubʿ*, literally a quarter, but ʿAql Bā ʿUwayn has six of these sub-divisions and the headman is called *muqaddam tamīmah*, *tamīmah* being a term I have not heard in areas west of this, but common in Oman. There is a Quarter called al-Ḥawṭah which would of course, at least at some time, have meant a sacred enclave but I have no information about it.[1]

Al-Shihr has a great many saints' tombs and there are ceremonies of considerable interest connected with them. In one I chanced upon two women, one of whom seemed to be busy with the sword of a sword fish. One frequently sees these swords in South Arabian shrines and I think I have also seen them in little shrines on the east African coast. I have heard, though not altogether confirmed, that women embrace the sword for fertility reasons. Though I have many times inquired why these swords are kept in shrines, I have never had a satisfactory answer other than what is perhaps a half-truth—that they are there as a sort of decoration. Ḥaḍramīs are most reluctant to allude to such superstitions though they are well aware they exist.

Much more unusual, however, than ordinary enough fertility practice is the *Sawbān*. When the sea is bad, Shihrīs will go to the saint Bin Jawbān, and, sitting on the ground just as they would in one of their dug-out canoes of Malabar workmanship, they go through the motions of sea fishing—their *rubbān* or captain standing up to cast the net they have brought with them just as if at sea. They sing a refrain:

Sawbān sawbān,
ʿUbayd ḥannū luh, Henna they've splashed on ʿUbayd.
Sawbān sawbān,
We-qaṭṭaṭū rujūluh, Patterns on his feet they've made.

1. It is a pity that we have scarcely a scrap of information about the Quarters of Aden before the British captured it, though from the histories we know it had Quarters such as al-Ḥubūsh, and more recently, al-Hunūd and al-Yahūd. The deep impress on Aden life made by the British is apparent in the term Ḥāfat al-Rizmint (Regiment) for Aden Front Bay, though soldiers had long ceased to have barracks there. I have lists of Quarters for some towns in the Yemen such as al-Shahārah, and information on the Quarters of Mogadiscio, the latter apparently organized in a rather similar fashion to those in Arabia.

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As in all cases when a visitation is made to a saint, the fishermen bring a gift for him.

Al-Shiḥr has a number of markets, such as the Shark Market, the Indian Market, the Date Market, and the Shibām Market, called after Shibām the commercial centre of the Wādī Ḥaḍramawt.

The headmen of the Quarters manage the visitations to the saints, but these are less than in former days because they are expensive. The Quarters engage singers for these occasions and have to contribute to the cost of them. They also have the same duties with regard to weddings and funerals as the headmen of Tarīm and, for the former, cooking pots and a sail are provided—the latter to be used as an awning over the street—I have also seen this in Mombasa in the Arab quarter there. At one time it seems that the Quarters of al-Shiḥr used to look after their poor, needy and orphans.

A survival of a custom, traces of which I think are still to be found in Arab countries, is the giving of nicknames to towns and villages—as perhaps Tunis (country) is called al-Khadrā'. Some of these names, as in the case of Saywūn are merely descriptive; because it is a long straggling town it is called al-Ṭawīlah, and I have heard camel-men using such phrases as 'We'll reach al-Ṭawīlah in the afternoon'. Tarīm is called al-Ghannā' or al-Ghunnā', a name also recorded in the literature on Ḥaḍramawt because it has so many singing birds. But other villages have mocking names reminiscent of the Wise Men of Gotham, and some nicknames even have sexual allusions. One Ḥaḍramī village which had no mountain hunting grounds of its own has a nickname, 'They planted a [stone] rolling pin'. This, it is explained, is so that it would grow into a mountain! An illustration of how strongly people feel about these names is to be found in the story told of Saywūn, which for some reason, has also the nickname '*Jurr*', a word that should mean 'drag' or 'draw', the implication of which I never could discover—so perhaps it has some particularly improper sense. The tale is told of a preacher in Saywūn reciting the verse on Moses and Aaron which contains the sentence '*Wa-akhadha bi-ra'si akhīhi yajurruhu ilayhi*'[1] He so disliked even this word reminiscent of the town's nickname that he substituted a synonym for *yajurru* of the sacred text!

These three—Ṣan'ā', Tarīm and al-Shiḥr—still require a great deal of study and it will have to be soon, for they are exposed to destruction, often for economic exploitation, like other famous cities of the Arabian Peninsula. Though our own study of Ṣan'ā' is only a beginning it may preserve even certain things that have

1. Qur'ān, VII, 149.

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already vanished. Other Yemeni towns, Ta'izz and Hodeidah excepted, are not in quite such immediate danger as Ṣan'ā'. There are still many Yemeni towns which merit intensive study and while modern amenities like piped water, roads, and electricity, come as a tremendous boon to them, it is hoped that the authorities may understand that they have a previous heritage and endeavour to preserve what is best of the past in them against the tasteless exploitation for gain by entrepreneurs.

What the like of these Arabian towns contributed to the cities of Islam that developed beyond Arabia I have not attempted to say. Apart from Mecca and Medina, very little in fact is known about Arabian towns. Nevertheless, I think some influences on the development of such a city as Baṣrah might be discovered—for example, one small point: in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, one comes across occasional references to places known as *jabbānah*, which in the Yemen is an open space, as in the place of prayer at the two Feasts outside old Ṣan'ā', known as al-Jabbānah. These *jabbānahs* not infrequently become integrated into the city as it develops. We are still close to the time when K. A. C. Creswell, as my colleague Dr Lewcock has pointed out to me, could commence his *Early Islamic Architecture* (London, 1958) with the contemptuous statement that, 'Arabia at the rise of Islam, does not appear to have possessed anything worthy of the name of architecture'. It is strange that he could ignore the existence of the Ṣirwāḥ and Mārib temples, the Dam of Mārib and the castle of Ghumdān. With our growing knowledge of southern Arabia it is certain that many adjustments will have to be made to ideas about the early development of Islamic civilization.

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